

Minnesota Public Radio News and Humphrey Institute Poll

Anger at Washington Helping Emmer, But Tea Party Backlash

Report prepared by the Center for the Study of Politics and Governance
Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs
University of Minnesota

Lawrence R. Jacobs
Director, Center for the Study of Politics and Governance

Joanne M. Miller
Research Associate, Center for Study of Politics and Governance
Associate Professor, Department of Political Science

Minnesota voters are angry, and they are taking it out on incumbents of both parties. There is a powerful reaction against the signature reforms passed by Democrats in Washington (health reform and the economic stimulus) and against the federal government more generally – with solid majorities distrusting it and deciding that it is too powerful.

The anger against Washington is helping Republican Gubernatorial candidate Tom Emmer.

Although the Tea Party helped Republicans in Minnesota and around the country wins the GOP nomination, this survey shows that it is having decidedly mixed effects on the larger pool of voters that will determine the outcome of the fall elections. Supporters of the Tea Party are offset by its opponents, who are backing the Democratic gubernatorial candidate Mark Dayton.

The survey was conducted of 750 likely voters in Minnesota between August 25 and 29, 2010. The margin of error ranges between ± 3.6 percentage points based on the conventional calculation and ± 5.3 percentage points, which is a more cautious estimate based on professional best practices. For smaller subgroups the margin of sampling error is larger. The section at the end of this report, “About the Survey,” discusses the statistical calculations for the margin of sampling error and how to interpret it.

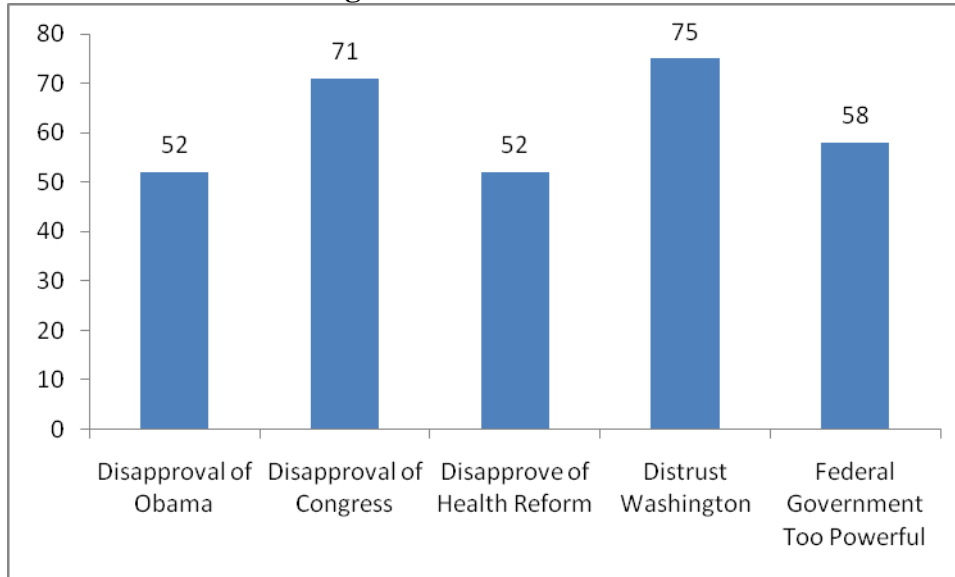
Backlash Against Incumbents

Minnesota voters are angry. Our earlier reports showed that majorities disapprove of the job performance by the Minnesota Legislature and believe the country and state are heading in the wrong direction; they also showed that Governor Tim Pawlenty’s approval is below the symbolically important 50% level and that his political campaigning out of state has generated a backlash. This disaffection with incumbents has convinced more

voters that former Massachusetts Governor Mitt Romney would be a better president than Pawlenty and has made the Minnesota legislative elections a toss-up.

This report shows the powerful frustration with Washington. Majorities do not like the signature reforms passed by Democrats in Washington; 52% of likely Minnesota voters disapprove of the Democratic health care reform. Voters are deeply suspicious of Washington: three quarters never or only sometimes trust the federal government to do the right thing and 6 out of ten reports that it has too much power.

Frustration with Washington



Hostility toward Washington Helping Emmer

Although elections often focus on local and state personalities and issues, the backlash against Washington is helping Republican gubernatorial candidate, Tom Emmer. Among the majorities who disapprove of Obama's performance and health care reform, 56 percent are backing Emmer. Sixty percent of voters who believe that the stimulus worsened the economy are also backing the GOP candidate.

Backlash Against Washington Helping Emmer

	Emmer	Dayton	Horner	DK/Refuse/won't vote/other
Obama Job Performance				
Approve (42%)	8%	56%	17%	19%
Disapprove (52%)	56	16	12	16
Health Reform				
Approve (33%)	6	60	16	18
Disapprove (52%)	57	15	11	16
Impact of Govt Stimulus on Economy				
Made Better (30%)	10	52	20	19
Worsen Economy (31%)	60	14	12	14
No impact (37%)	31	35	11	24

Note: Percentages do not sum to 100% because table excludes some response categories (including for those who did not offer an opinion)

The backlash against Obama and his signature policies has mushroomed into more general hostility toward the federal government. The majority of voters who have concluded that the federal government has too much power are breaking decisively for Emmer (48% to 19% for Dayton) and a plurality of those who never or only some of the time trust Washington to do the right thing are breaking for Emmer by a 39% to 28% margin.

Backlash Against Washington Helping Emmer

	Emmer	Dayton	Horner	DK/Refuse/won't vote/other
Trust of Fed Govt				
Always/most (23%)	17%	50%	14%	19%
Some/never (76%)	39	28	14	19
Fed Govt power				
Too much (59%)	48	19	13	19
About right (34%)	13	54	13	20
Too little (3%)	9	73	9	9

Note: Percentages do not sum to 100% because table excludes some response categories (including for those who did not offer an opinion)

Tea Party Mixed Impacts on Republicans

The Tea Party has injected energy into the Republican Party and helped the candidates it endorsed to win the GOP nomination around the country. As Minnesota turns to the general election and a wider electorate, the Tea Party is a mixed blessing for Republican gubernatorial candidate Tom Emmer.

Twenty-five percent of likely voters support the Tea Party and an overwhelming majority of them (70%) favor Emmer. But the Tea Party has ignited a backlash that can hurt Emmer: among the 22 percent who oppose it, two-thirds of them support Dayton. In addition, a greater number of voters indicate that they are less likely to support candidates who win the Tea Party's endorsement (29% to 16%) and most of these likely voters back Dayton (52%). (Forty-eight percent report that the Tea Party's endorsement makes no difference.)

Tea Party Turns Off General Election Voters

	Emmer	Dayton	Horner	DK or no response
Tea Party Movement				
Support (25%)	70%	9%	13%	7%
Oppose (22%)	4	65	15	17
DK or no response (53%)	29	32	13	26
Tea Party Endorsement				
More Likely (16%)	69	9	17	6
Less Likely (29%)	14	52	16	19
No Difference (48%)	36	31	12	20
DK or no response (7%)	22	33	4	42

Although the Tea Party's hostility to government is shared by voters, supermajorities of Minnesotans still favor existing programs (like Social Security and Medicare) that provide substantial concrete benefits. This support is translating into a 12 percentage point advantage for Dayton (39% versus 27% for Emmer).

Supermajorities Support Social Security and Medicare but Little Boost for Dayton

	Emmer	Dayton	Horner	DK/Refuse/won't vote/other
Social Security & Medicare worth cost				
Worth the costs (74%)	27%	39%	15%	19%
Not worth costs (19%)	56	13	11	20

Note: Percentages do not sum to 100% because table excludes some response categories (including for those who did not offer an opinion)

About the Survey

This survey is a collaboration between Minnesota Public Radio News and the Center for the Study of Politics and Governance at the University of Minnesota's Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs. The survey was analyzed by the Center. The research team was Lawrence R. Jacobs (Center Director) and Joanne M. Miller (Associate Professor, Department of Political Science). Charles Gregory provided research assistance.

The survey was fielded by the Information Specialists Group (ISG) and is based on a landline random digit dial survey in Minnesota. ISG called a sample of telephone exchanges that was randomly selected by a computer from a list of active residential exchanges within Minnesota. Within each exchange, random digits were added to form a complete telephone number, thus permitting access to both listed and unlisted numbers. Within each household, one adult was selected to be the respondent for the survey.

As is common with public opinion surveys, the data were weighted. In the first stage, the data were weighted based on the number of potential survey respondents and the number of landline telephone numbers in the household. In the second stage, data were weighted according to cell phone usage, as well as gender, age, race, and Hispanic ethnicity to approximate the demographic characteristics of the population according to the Census.

Results are based on a model that accounts for the likelihood of a respondent voting based on the following factors: self-reported probability of voting in the upcoming election, voting in the 2006 gubernatorial election as reported by the respondent, interest in the 2010 election, and whether the respondent reported being registered to vote. The model estimates a turnout of 59%, which we expect to increase during the fall as the campaign heats up and interest in the election increases.

The key characteristics of the sample's likely voters in Minnesota are the following:

	Likely Voters
Republican	46%
Independent	13%
Democrat	41%
Men	49%
Women	52%
18-40	26%
41-50	24%
51-63	25%
64 and older	25%

(Percentages here and above may round to higher than 100% due to rounding.)

750 likely voters living in Minnesota were interviewed by telephone between August 25 and 29, 2010. The margin of error ranges between +/-3.6 percentage points based on the

conventional calculation and ± 5.3 percentage points, which is a more cautious estimate that takes into account design effects, in accordance with professional best practices. The conventional calculation of the margin of sampling error is primarily based on the number of respondents and, critically, assumes that all respondents selected for interviewing were actually reached. No public opinion survey successfully contacts the entire sample and therefore the professional best practice is to adjust for the actual response rate and for other design effects, producing a higher margin of sampling error. In this report, we use the conventional calculation to determine the minimal level of significance and the more cautious calculation to reach a higher level of confidence in the results.

Using the design-effect calculation of the margin of sample error, in 19 cases out of 20 the results among Minneapolis voters will differ (in theory) by no more than ± 5.3 percentage points in either direction from what would have been obtained by interviewing all likely voters in the election. The response rate is 26 percent (based on AAPOR response rate calculation 4).

The results of properly conducted scientific surveys of candidate support estimate the most probable relative positions at the time of the interviewing. The margin of error indicates a range of support with unequal probabilities of accuracy. For example, assume a poll reports that Candidate A received 55% and Candidate B received 45% of support with a margin of error of ± 5 percentage points. Based on normal sampling distribution, the 55% to 45% result is the best or most probable standing at the time of the survey. Taking into account the margin of sampling error, however, we can estimate the lower boundary of support for Candidate A as 50% and the upper boundary of support for Candidate B as 50%. These results are possible but are less probable.

In addition to sampling error, the practical difficulties of conducting any survey of public opinion may introduce sources of error into the poll. Variations in the wording and order of questions, for example, may lead to somewhat different results.

This survey invested considerable resources in a set of procedures to reduce distortions. The sample of interviewees was drawn using comprehensive lists of phone exchanges. In addition, the interviewers were carefully trained and monitored to maintain consistency in implementing the questionnaire. Further, several steps were used to capture as much of the sample as possible including call backs to numbers when no one appeared to be at home or when the initial request to conduct the interview was not accepted.

Questions

Do you approve or disapprove of the way Congress is handling its job?

- 1 Approve
- 2 Disapprove
- 8 Don't Know (vol)
- 9 Refused (vol)

Overall, do you think the benefits from government programs such as Social Security and Medicare are worth the costs of those programs for taxpayers, or are they not worth the costs to taxpayers?

- 1 Worth the costs
- 2 Not worth the costs
- 8 Don't Know (vol)
- 9 Refused (vol)

How much of the time do you think you can trust the government in Washington to do what is right - just about always, most of the time, or only some of the time?

- 1 Always
- 2 Most
- 3 Some
- 4 Never (vol.)
- 8 Don't Know (vol)
- 9 Refused (vol)

Which one of the following statements comes closest to your views about governmental power today? The federal government has too much power, the federal government has just about the right amount of power, the federal government has too little power?

- 1 The federal government has too much power.
- 2 The federal government has just about the right amount of power.
- 3 The federal government has too little power.
- 8 Don't Know (vol)
- 9 Refused (vol)

Do you approve or disapprove of the federal health care reform bill that was recently signed into law?

- 1 Approve
- 2 Disapprove
- 8 Don't Know (vol)
- 9 Refused (vol)

So far, do you think the things the federal government has done to try to stimulate the economy have made the economy better, made the economy worse, or do you think they have had no impact on the economy so far?

- 1 Better
- 2 Worse

- 3 No Impact
- 8 Don't Know (vol)
- 9 Refused (vol)

Do you support the Tea Party movement, do you oppose it, are you undecided, or haven't you heard enough about it yet to form an opinion?

- 1 Support
- 2 Oppose
- 3 Undecided
- 4 Haven't heard enough to form an opinion
- 8 Don't Know (vol)
- 9 Refused (vol)

If a candidate running for office in Minnesota was endorsed by the Tea Party Movement, would this make you more likely to vote for the candidate, less likely to vote for the candidate, or wouldn't it make a difference?

- 1 More likely
- 2 Less likely
- 3 No difference
- 8 Don't Know (vol)
- 9 Refused (vol)